

KING KUSHA

Kusha, prince of Kushavati was blessed with immense wisdom and extraordinary talent but he had the ugliest of faces. The beautiful princess Prabhavati was not aware of his ugliness when she married him. Kusha's mother saw to it that the princess never set eyes on her son's face. But when she did, Prabhavati refused to have anything to do with her husband and went away leaving poor Kusha broken-hearted.

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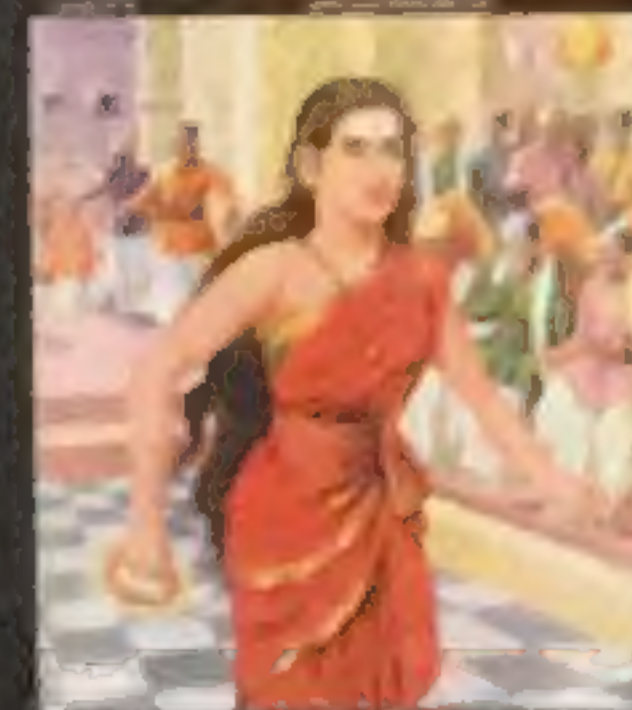
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FABLES &
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KING KUSHA

A JATAKA STORY ABOUT INNER BEAUTY

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KING KUSHA



SHEELAVATI, THE CHIEF QUEEN OF THE HEIRLESS KING OKKAKA OF KUSHAVATI, WAS OFFERED A BOON BY INDRA, KING OF THE GODS.



YOU SHALL HAVE TWO SONS. ONE WISE BUT UGLY, THE OTHER HANDSOME BUT A FOOL. WHICH WILL YOU HAVE FIRST?

THE WISE ONE, MY LORD.

IN DUE COURSE, SHEELAVATI GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.

HE SHALL BE CALLED KUSHA.



TWO YEARS LATER, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO THE SECOND SON — JAYAMPATI.

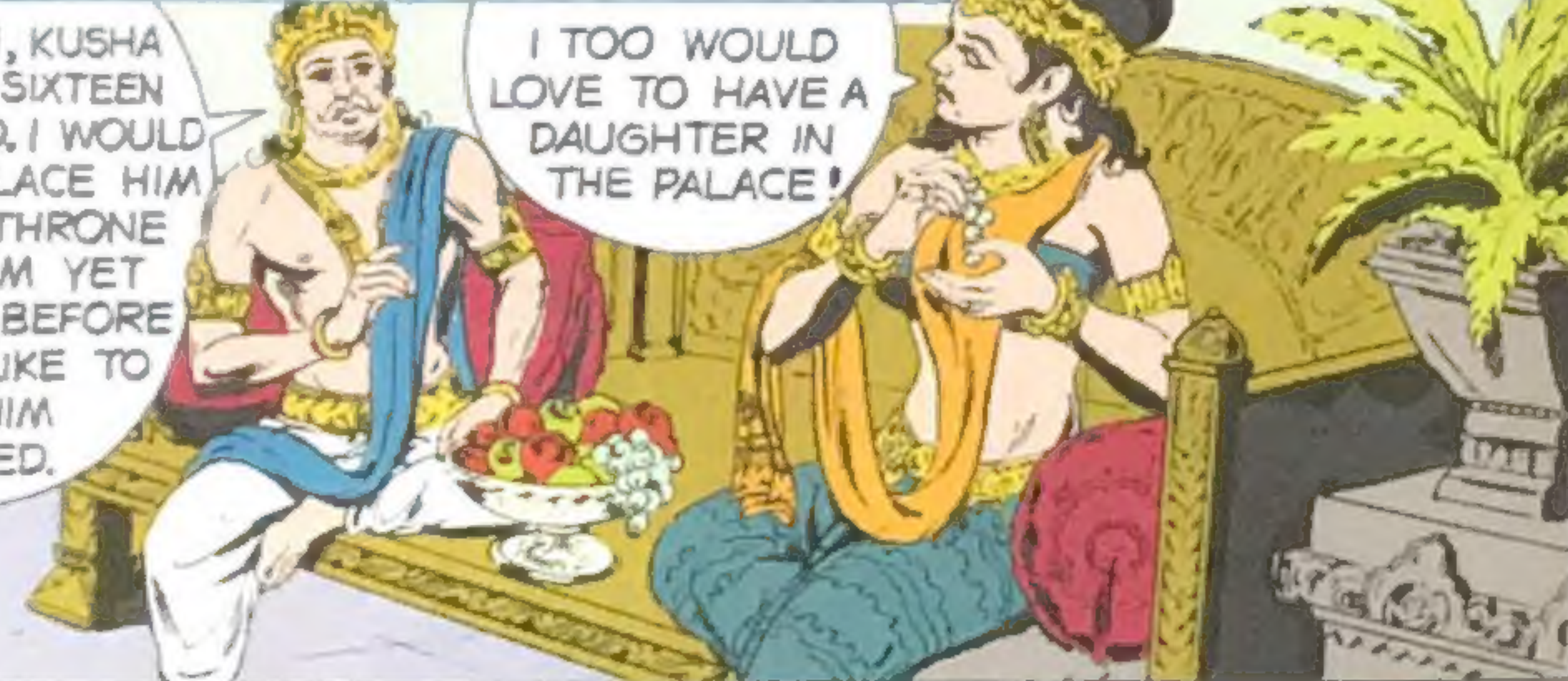


EVEN AS A CHILD, KUSHA WAS CONSCIOUS OF HIS APPEARANCE.



IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, KUSHA MASTERED THE ARTS OF MUSIC, PAINTING AND SCULPTURE. ONE DAY—

SHEELAVATI, KUSHA IS ALMOST SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. I WOULD LIKE TO PLACE HIM ON THE THRONE WHILE I AM YET ALIVE. BUT BEFORE I DO, I'D LIKE TO SEE HIM MARRIED.



WHEN KUSHA LEARNT OF HIS PARENTS' WISHES HE WAS SAD.



AFTER GIVING THE MATTER A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT, HE HIT UPON A PLAN.



WHEN THE IMAGE WAS COMPLETED, KUSHA COULD NOT HELP ADMIRING HIS OWN WORK.



HE THEN BROUGHT HIS MOTHER TO SEE IT.





THE COUNCILLORS TRAVELLED FROM KINGDOM TO KINGDOM, EXHIBITING THE IMAGE, TILL AT LAST THEY ARRIVED AT SAGALA, THE CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM OF MADDA.



AS USUAL, THEY PLACED THE IMAGE AT A CONSPICUOUS SPOT. THEN—

NOW LET US STAND AWAY FROM IT AND OVERHEAR THE COMMENTS OF THOSE WHO PASS BY.



AFTER A WHILE, A HUNCHBACK FOLLOWED BY SEVEN OR EIGHT MAIDS CAME BY.



PRABHAVATI! WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING ALONE HERE AT THIS HOUR? SHOULD YOUR FATHER HEAR OF THIS IT WILL BE THE END OF US.



OO-OO-OO! MY HAND!



IT'S A METAL IMAGE!





MADAM! WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOUR HAND! IT'S BRUISED AND BROKEN!



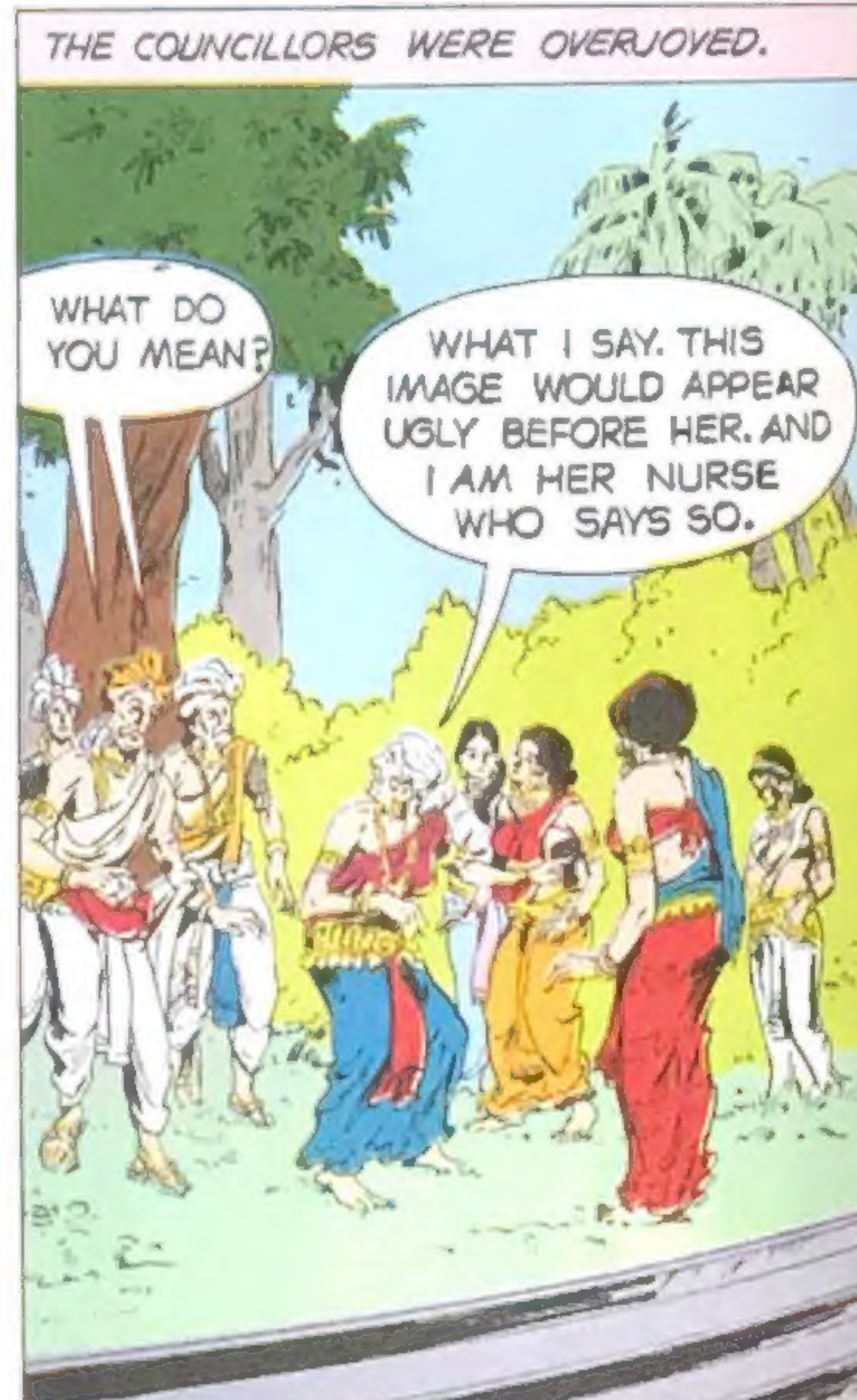
BUT THE OLD HUNCHBACK SOON RECOVERED HER COMPOSURE.

HA! HA! HA! WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN. I MISTOOK THIS CHEAP IMAGE TO BE THE PRINCESS.

HA! HA! HOW COULD YOU?



I HAVE HURT MY HANDS FOR INSULTING HER. WHAT IS THIS WORTHLESS IMAGE COMPARED TO MY DARLING PRABHAVATI!



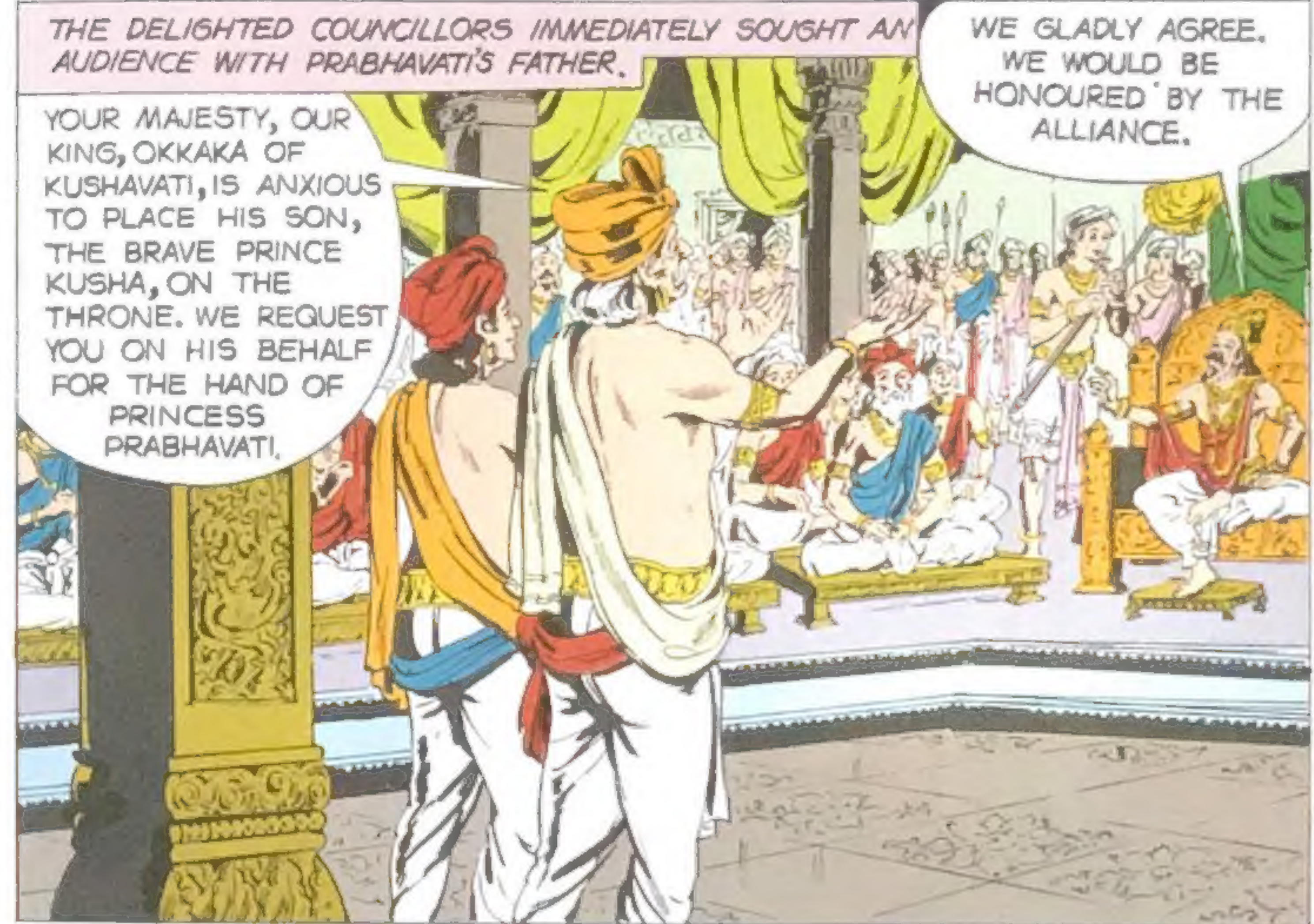
THE COUNCILLORS WERE OVERJOYED.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WHAT I SAY. THIS IMAGE WOULD APPEAR UGLY BEFORE HER. AND I AM HER NURSE WHO SAYS SO.

THE DELIGHTED COUNCILLORS IMMEDIATELY SOUGHT AN AUDIENCE WITH PRABHAVATI'S FATHER.

YOUR MAJESTY, OUR KING, OKKAKA OF KUSHAVATI, IS ANXIOUS TO PLACE HIS SON, THE BRAVE PRINCE KUSHA, ON THE THRONE. WE REQUEST YOU ON HIS BEHALF FOR THE HAND OF PRINCESS PRABHAVATI.



WE GLADLY AGREE. WE WOULD BE HONoured BY THE ALLIANCE.



BACK AT KUSHAVATI—

YOUR MAJESTY, WE HAVE FOUND HER—A PRINCESS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE IMAGE!

WHEN KING OKKAKA AND QUEEN SHEELAVATI HEARD THE WHOLE STORY—

LET US SET OUT FOR SAGALA AT ONCE WITH A LARGE RETINUE.

YES! LET US NOT WASTE A MOMENT.

WHEN THEY REACHED SAGALA, THEY WERE RECEIVED GRACIOUSLY BY THE KING, THE QUEEN, PRINCESS PRABHAVATI AND HER SEVEN YOUNGER SISTERS.



LATER, WHEN PRABHAVATI CAME TO PAY HER RESPECTS TO SHEELAVATI —



SHOULD THIS DAZZLING BEAUTY SEE MY SON'S FACE, SHE WILL RUN AWAY FROM HIM THAT VERY MOMENT. YET I MUST NOT FAIL MY SON. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

WHEN PRABHAVATI HAD LEFT, SHEELAVATI SPOKE TO THE KING OF MADDA.



YOUR DAUGHTER IS WORTHY OF MY SON, BUT...

YES?



WE HAVE AN UNUSUAL TRADITION. IF SHE WILL AGREE TO OBSERVE IT WE WILL TAKE HER AS OUR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

WHAT IS THE TRADITION?



A WIFE IS NOT PERMITTED TO SEE HER HUSBAND'S FACE TILL SHE HAS CONCEIVED. WILL SHE AGREE?

PRABHAVATI AGREED TO RESPECT THE TRADITION AND AFTER MUCH GIVING AND RECEIVING OF GIFTS, OKKAKA AND SHEELAVATI ESCORTED THEIR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, ALONG WITH HER NURSE AND A VAST RETINUE, TO KUSHAVATI.



BACK AT KUSHAVATI —

HAVE THE CITY DECORATED.
RELEASE ALL PRISONERS.
THE WEDDING AND
THE CORONATION OF
PRINCE KUSHA SHALL
BE CELEBRATED
TODAY!



NEITHER KUSHA NOR PRABHAVATI SAW EACH OTHER'S FACE, BUT—

HOW WELL HE
PLAYS THE VEENA!
HE MUST HAVE
THE SENSITIVE
FACE OF A
MUSICIAN.



AH! I CAN ONLY
IMAGINE HOW SHE
LOOKS BY THINKING
OF MY GOLDEN
IMAGE.



A FEW DAYS AFTER THE WEDDING, KING KUSHA CAME TO SHEELAVATI.

MOTHER, PLEASE PERMIT
ME TO LOOK AT MY WIFE
BUT ONCE.

YOU WILL HAVE TO
WAIT UNTIL SHE HAS
CONCEIVED.



* LUTE-LIKE INSTRUMENT

I CANNOT WAIT
TILL THEN,
MOTHER.



ALL RIGHT. GO TO THE
ELEPHANT STALLS DISGUISED
AS A KEEPER. I WILL
BRING PRABHAVATI THERE
BUT SEE THAT YOU DO
NOT MAKE YOURSELF
KNOWN TO HER.



SHEELAVATI THEN WENT TO
PRABHAVATI.

YOU HAVE NOT
YET SEEN YOUR
LORD'S ELEPHANTS.
COME, I WILL SHOW
THEM TO YOU.



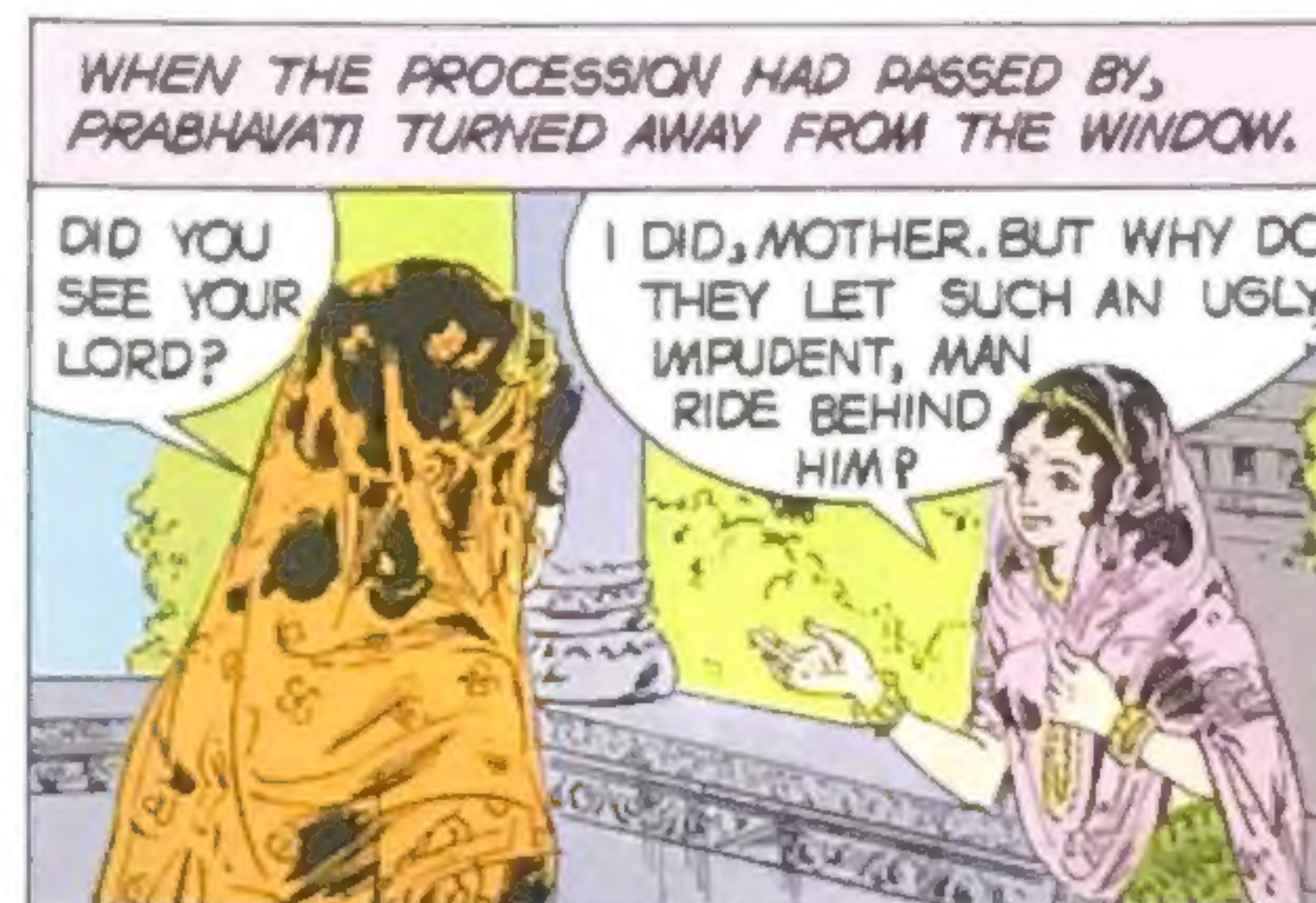
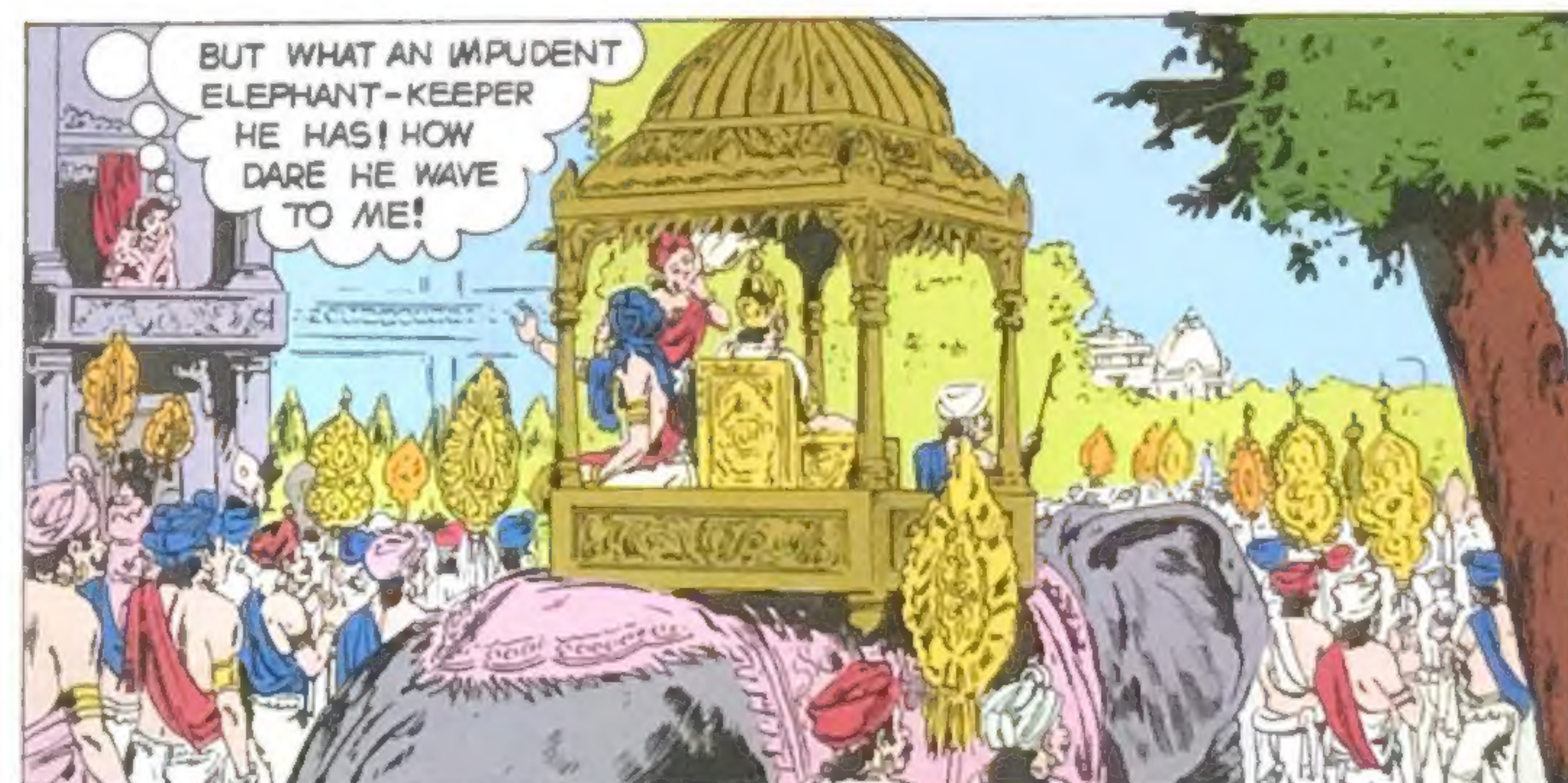
WHEN KUSHA SAW PRABHAVATI AS SHE WALKED
BEHIND HIS MOTHER, HE WAS ENCHANTED.

IS SHE A
PRINCESS OR
A GODDESS?



DETERMINED TO FIND OUT, HE PICKED UP A HANDFUL OF DUNG AND FLUNG IT
AT HER.





BUT PRABHAVATI WAS NOT CONVINCED.

NO MAN WOULD BE ALLOWED TO BEHAVE LIKE THAT HOWEVER EXCELLENT HIS SERVICES MIGHT BE. CAN IT BE THAT HE IS KING KUSHA AND THEY DO NOT LET ME SEE HIM BECAUSE HE IS SO UGLY?



SHE TURNED TO HER NURSE.

RUN, MY DEAR. FIND OUT WHO WAS THE KING—THE MAN IN FRONT OR THE ONE BEHIND.

HOW AM I TO FIND OUT?



THE KING WILL BE THE FIRST TO ALIGHT FROM THE ELEPHANT. GO. DON'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME.



WHEN THE NURSE SAW KUSHA ALIGHT FIRST, SHE WAS SHOCKED.

WHAT IS THAT HIDEOUS ONE KING KUSHA?

AH! ISN'T THAT PRABHAVATI'S NURSE? SHE IS HERE TO SPY ON ME.



HE SENT FOR HER.

I CHARGE YOU ON PAIN OF DEATH NOT TO REVEAL MY SECRET.



SHE WENT BACK TO PRABHAVATI WHO EAGERLY AWAITED HER RETURN.

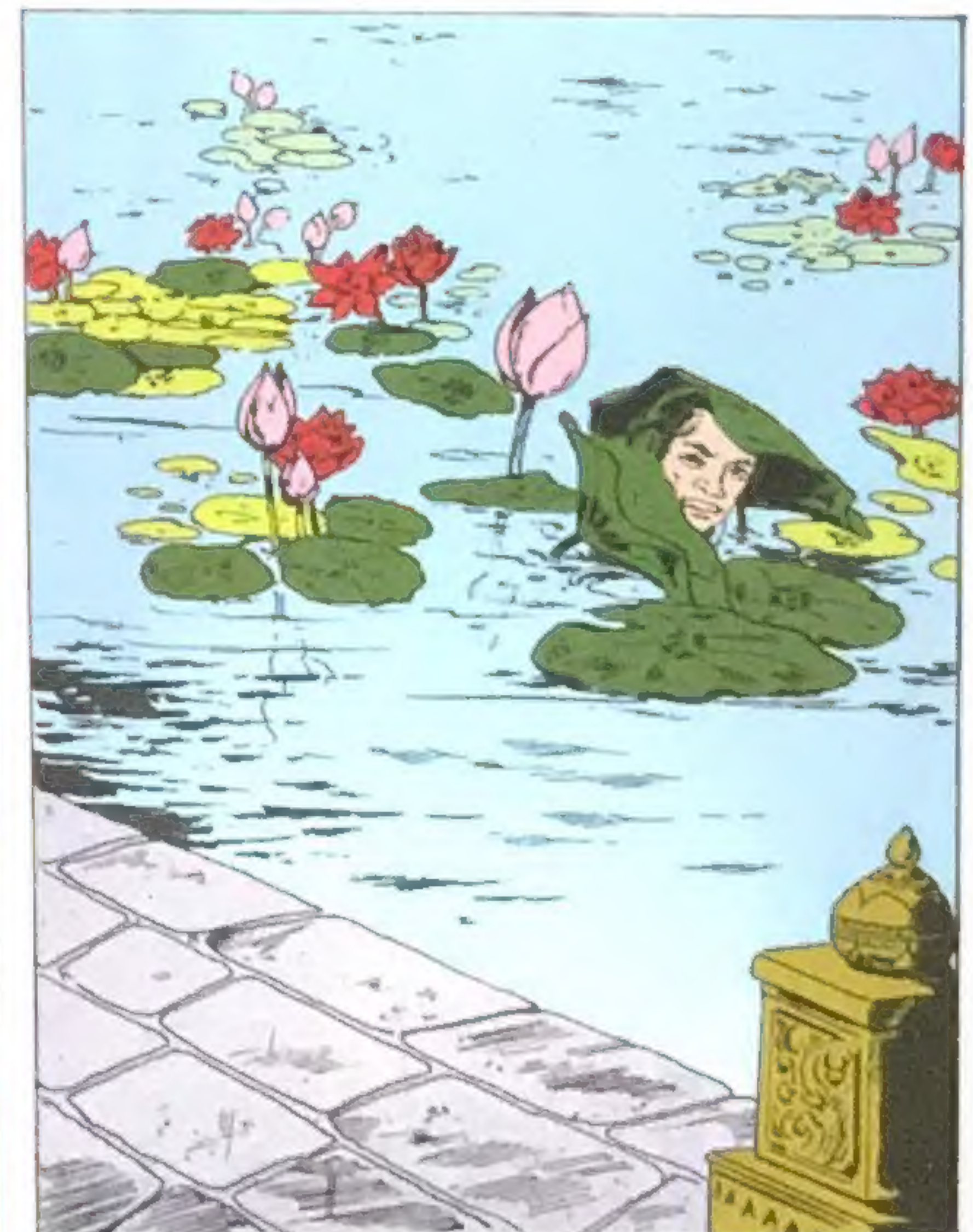
THE ONE THAT SAT IN FRONT WAS THE FIRST TO ALIGHT.

THANK GOD!

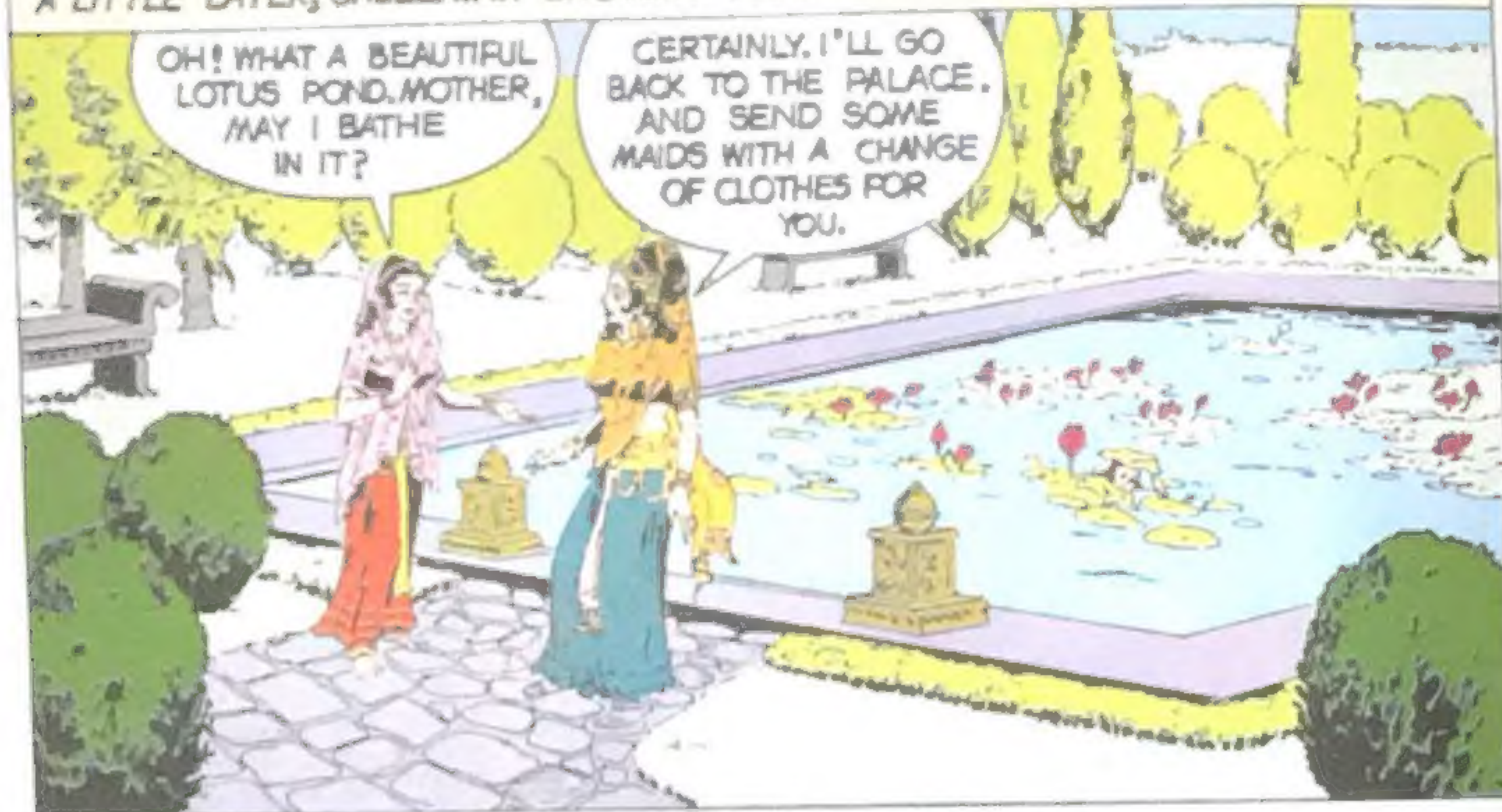


THE SECOND SIGHT OF PRABHAVATI MADE KUSHA WANT TO SEE HER YET AGAIN. HE SPOKE TO HIS MOTHER.

WELL THEN, IF YOU MUST, ENTER THE LOTUS POOL, CONCEAL YOURSELF AND WAIT.



A LITTLE LATER, SHEELAVATI BROUGHT PRABHAVATI TO THE GARDEN.

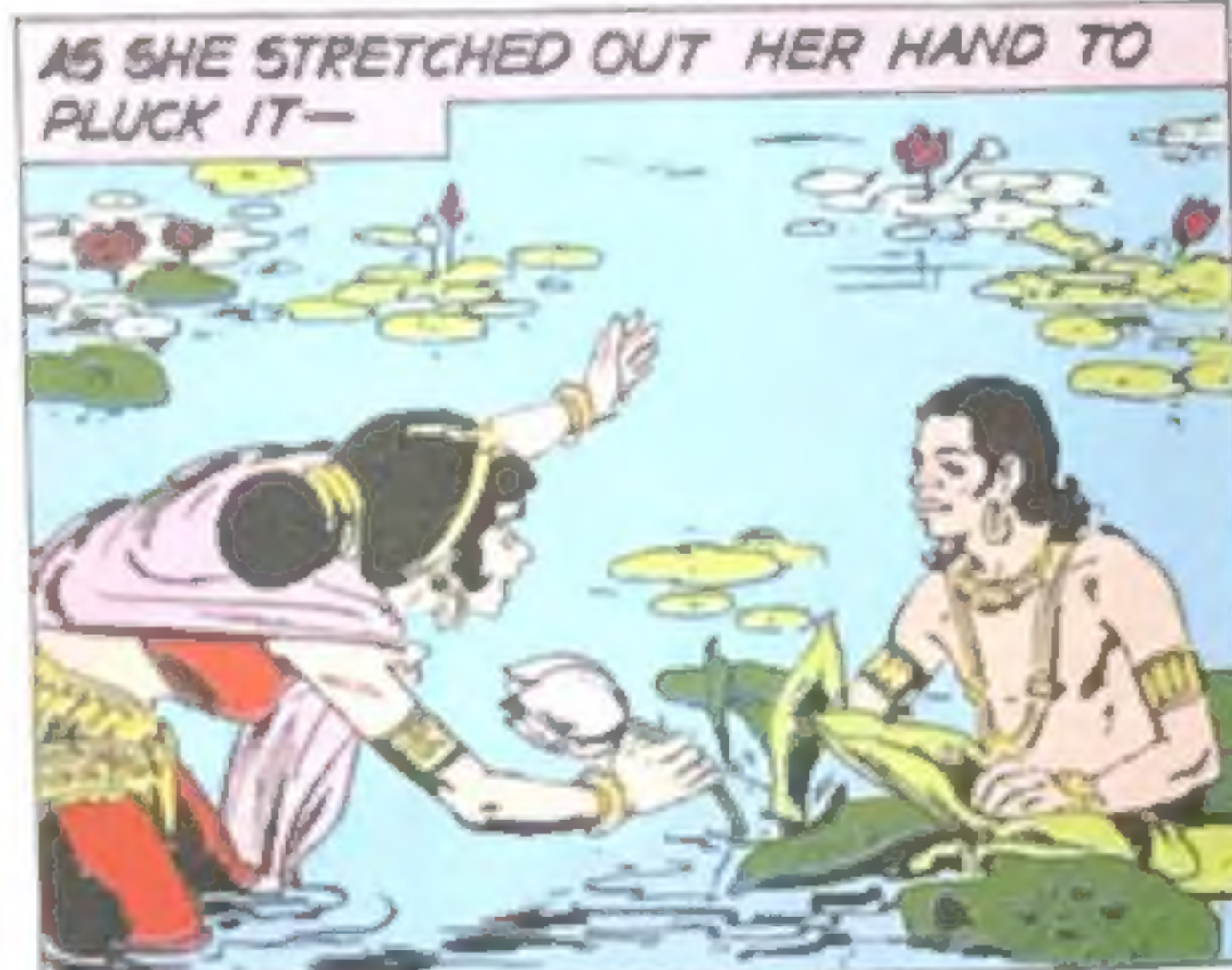


OH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL LOTUS POND. MOTHER, MAY I BATHE IN IT?

CERTAINLY. I'LL GO BACK TO THE PALACE, AND SEND SOME MAIDS WITH A CHANGE OF CLOTHES FOR YOU.



AH! THAT LOTUS IS LARGER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE REST. I'LL PLUCK IT FOR MYSELF.

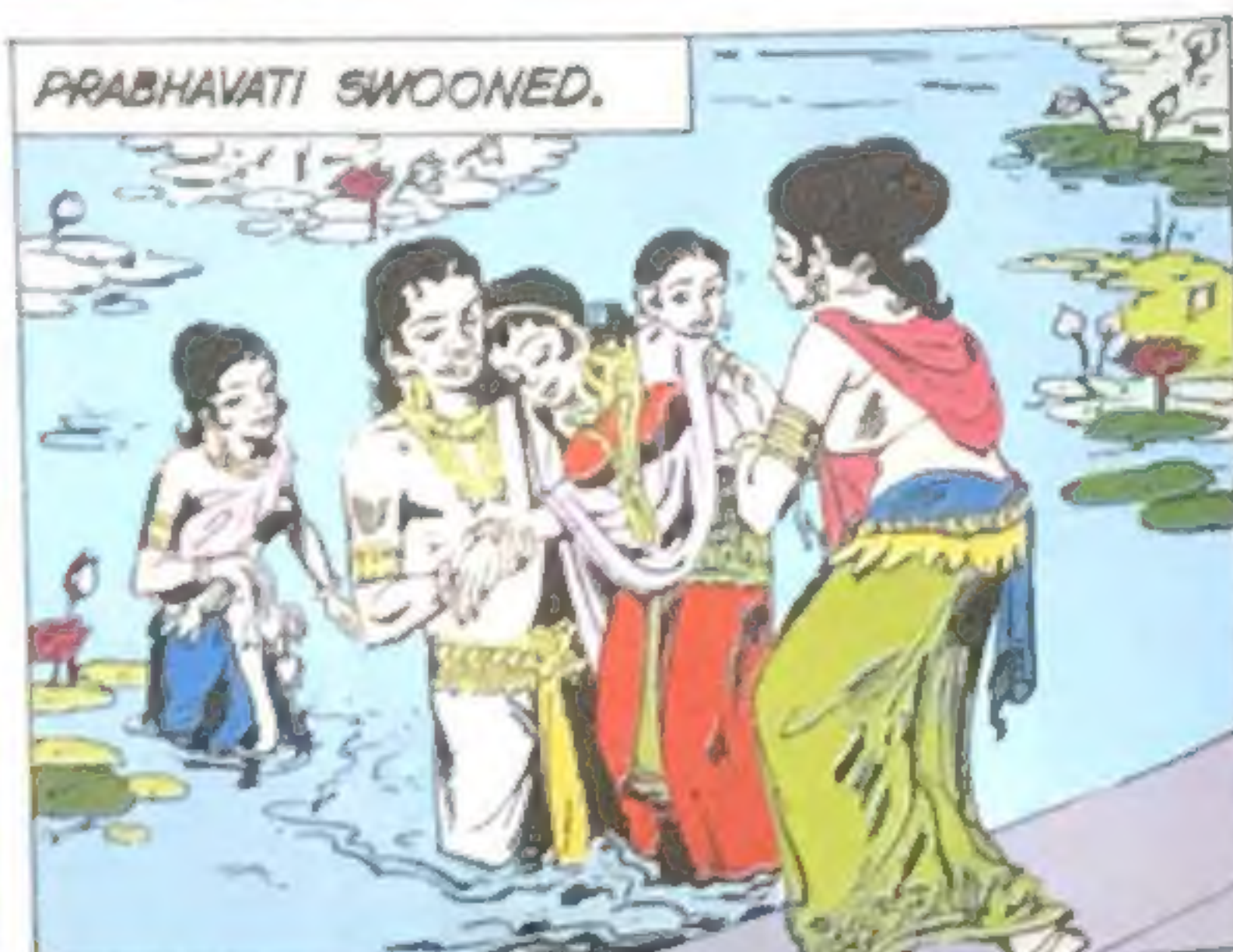


AS SHE STRETCHED OUT HER HAND TO PLUCK IT—



EE—EE—AH! A GOBLIN HAS CAUGHT HOLD OF ME.

I AM KING KUSHA!



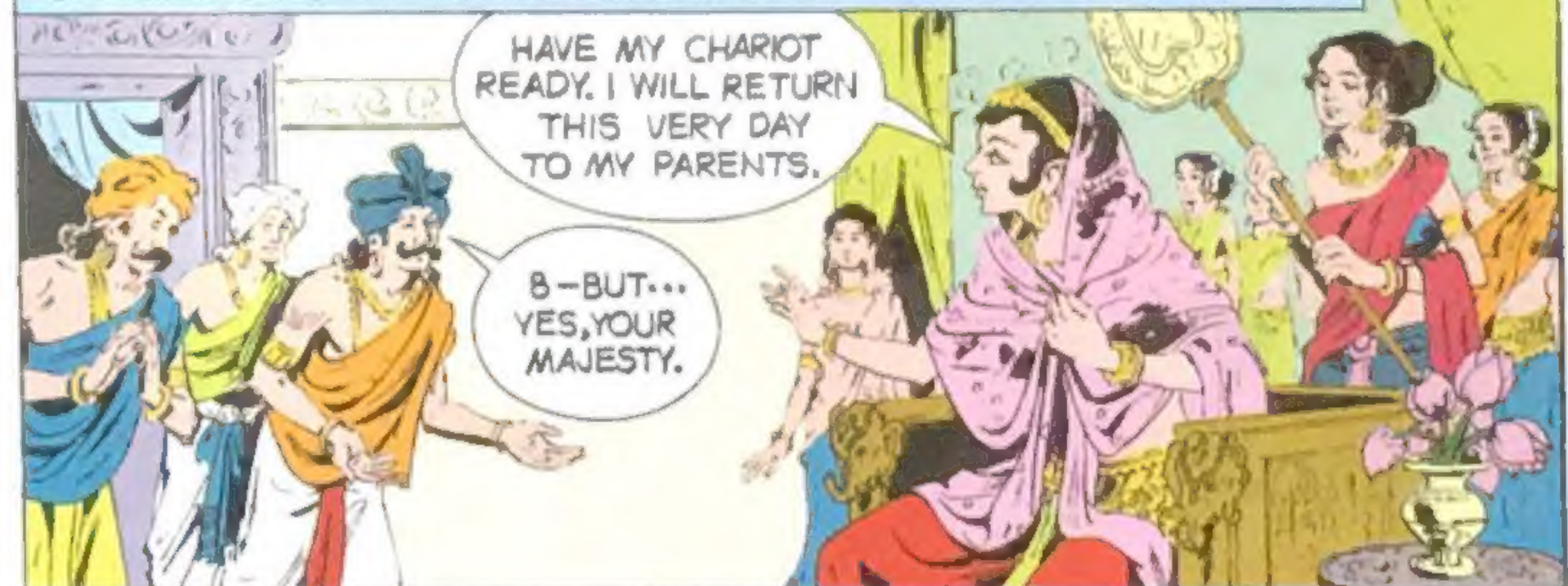
PRABHAVATI SWOONED.

WHEN SHE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, SHE FOUND HERSELF IN HER CHAMBER SURROUNDED BY HER NURSE AND HER MAIDS.



I WAS RIGHT. IT WAS HIM ALL THE TIME. WHY SHOULD I LIVE WITH SUCH AN UGLY, HIDEOUS MAN, POWERFUL KING THOUGH HE BE.

SHE SUMMONED THE COUNCILLORS WHO HAD SPOKEN TO HER FATHER.



HAVE MY CHARIOT READY. I WILL RETURN THIS VERY DAY TO MY PARENTS.

B—BUT... YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO, THEY WENT AND CONSULTED KUSHA.



DO NOT STOP HER. SHE WOULD BE UNHAPPY. I WILL GO AFTER HER LATER AND BRING HER BACK WITH HER CONSENT.

THOUGH KUSHA SO KIND-HEARTEDLY LET PRABHAVATI GO, HE WAS DESOLATE. TWO DAYS LATER —

BY THIS TIME SHE WILL HAVE REACHED SAGALA.



HE WENT TO HIS MOTHER.

MOTHER, I WILL GO AND BRING PRABHAVATI BACK, WITH HER CONSENT.

GO, MY SON. BUT TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.



EQUIPPING HIMSELF WITH ALL THAT HE WOULD NEED, KUSHA SET OUT FOR SAGALA.

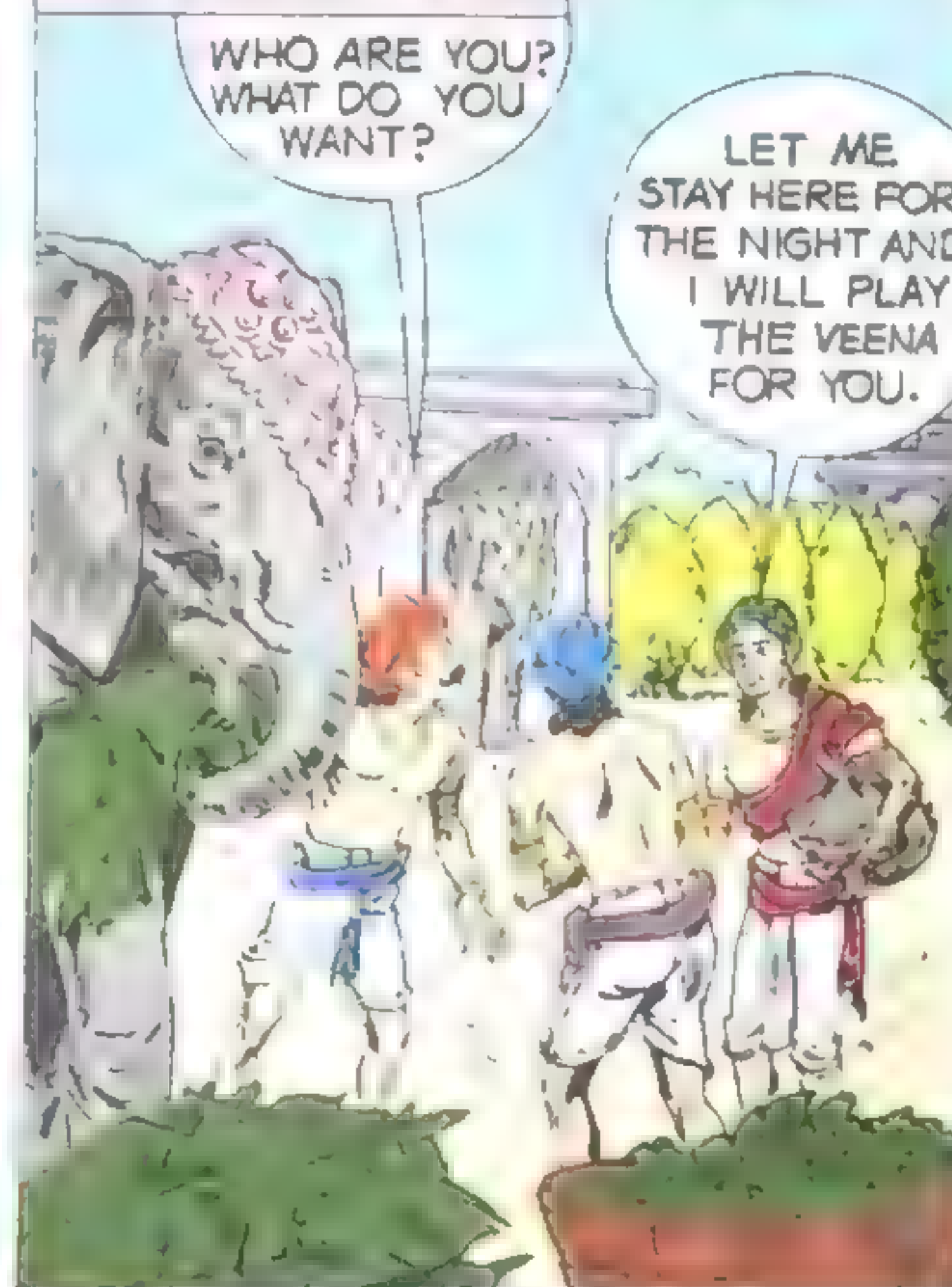
I WILL NOT REST TILL I WIN HER LOVE.



WHEN HE REACHED SAGALA, HE ENTERED THE PALACE AND FOUND HIS WAY TO THE ELEPHANT STALLS.

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

LET ME STAY HERE FOR THE NIGHT AND I WILL PLAY THE VEENA FOR YOU.



THEY AGREED. KUSHA TUNED HIS VEENA AND BEGAN TO PLAY.



IN THE PALACE, PRABHAVATI SUDDENLY WOKE UP.

THOSE PURE NOTES. THEY CAN ONLY COME FROM HIS VEENA. HOW I LOVED TO HEAR THEM TILL I SAW HIS FACE. HE HAS FOLLOWED ME HERE.



EARLY NEXT MORNING, KUSHA WOKE UP.

I MUST NOW TRY TO MEET PRABHAVATI WITHOUT LETTING ANYONE KNOW WHO I AM.



HE WENT TO THE ROYAL POTTER AND BECAME HIS APPRENTICE. A FEW DAYS LATER —

WHY, MY SON, YOU ARE TALENTED! THESE VASES ARE BEAUTIFUL! I SHALL TAKE THEM TO THE PALACE RIGHT AWAY.

MASTER, DO NOT FORGET. THIS ONE WITH THESE FIGURES IS FOR PRINCESS PRABHAVATI. I MADE IT SPECIALLY FOR HER.





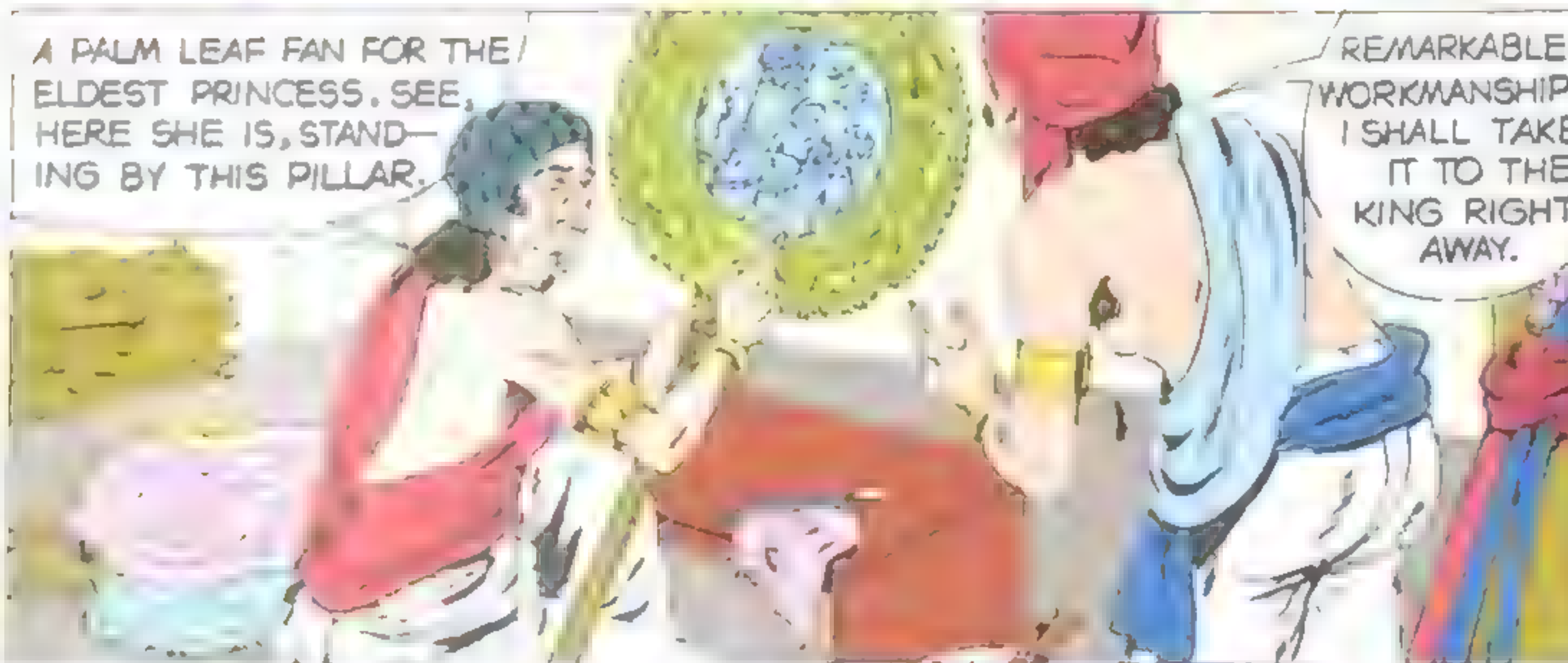
KUSHA LEFT THE POTTER AND APPRENTICED HIMSELF TO THE ROYAL WICKER-
WORKER. A FEW DAYS LATER—



WHOEVER HE IS, HE IS
THE BEST WORKER I'VE
HAD SO FAR. HOW
DEFTLY HIS
FINGERS
MOVE.

WHAT ARE YOU
MAKING?

A PALM LEAF FAN FOR THE
ELDEST PRINCESS. SEE,
HERE SHE IS, STAND-
ING BY THIS PILLAR.



REMARKABLE
WORKMANSHIP!
I SHALL TAKE
IT TO THE
KING RIGHT
AWAY.

AT THE PALACE—



WHOSE WORK
IS THIS? NOT
YOURS, I'M
CERTAIN.

IT'S THE CREATION
OF MY NEW AP-
PRENTICE, SIR.

NOT YOUR APPRENTICE
BUT YOUR MASTER.
GIVE HIM
THESE GOLD
COINS.



THE MOMENT PRABHAVATI SAW THE FAN,
HOWEVER—



THIS, TOO,
S HIS HAND-
WORK. WHY
DOES HE
PURSUE
ME?

SHE FLUNG THE FAN ON THE FLOOR.



HA! HA! IT
WAS NOT KING
KUSHA WHO MADE
THAT FAN. SO WHY
DO YOU DISOWN
IT, PRABHAVATI?

DON'T YOU
DARE SHOW
ME SUCH
INFERIOR
WORK EVER
AGAIN.

THE WICKER-WORKER RETURNED, AND TOLD
KUSHA ALL THAT HAPPENED AT THE PALACE.



...WOMEN ARE STRANGE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE
THREW IT ON THE
FLOOR IN A RAGE.

KUSHA KNEW.



I WILL HAVE TO TRY
SOME OTHER MEANS
TO MEET HER.

HE PONDERED FOR A WHILE, THEN—

I KNOW WHAT. I SHALL SEEK SERVICE IN THE ROYAL KITCHEN, PERHAPS...



KUSHA WAS LUCKY. THE ROYAL COOK HAD SACKED ONE OF HIS ASSISTANTS THAT VERY DAY.

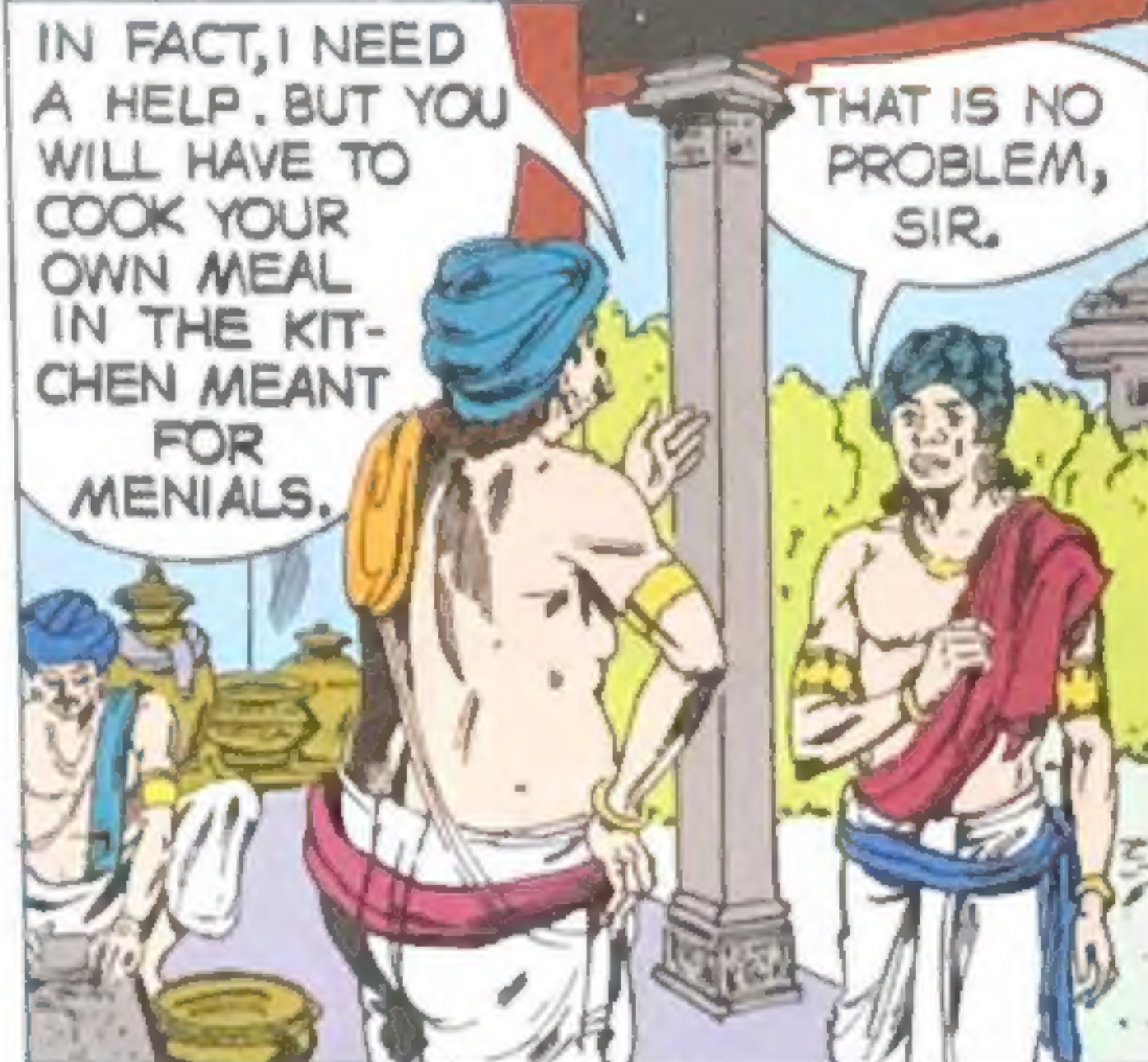
AND DON'T EVER LET ME SEE YOU NEAR THE ROYAL KITCHEN AGAIN.



SO THE MOMENT KUSHA APPROACHED THE ROYAL COOK —

IN FACT, I NEED A HELP. BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO COOK YOUR OWN MEAL IN THE KITCHEN MEANT FOR MENIALS.

THAT IS NO PROBLEM, SIR.



KUSHA SOON BECAME AN EXPERT COOK—BETTER EVEN THAN HIS MASTER. ONE DAY—

HERE, YOU MAY COOK THIS CHOP FOR YOURSELF.



AN HOUR LATER, AS THE KING WAS BEING SERVED—

MM—M—M! WHAT A DELICIOUS AROMA. IS THAT DISH YET TO COME?



N—NO, YOUR MAJESTY. WHAT YOU SMELL IS THE CHOP MY NEW ASSISTANT IS COOK—ING FOR HIMSELF.

THEN LET ME TASTE IT.



AFTER THE KING HAD TASTED IT—

HENCEFORTH YOUR ASSISTANT SHALL COOK FOR ME AND MY DAUGHTERS AH! AND GIVE HIM THESE GOLD COINS.



KUSHA WAS EXTREMELY HAPPY WHEN HE HEARD ABOUT THE KING'S ORDER.

PLEASE KEEP THE COINS FOR YOURSELF, MASTER. I HAVE NO USE FOR THEM.

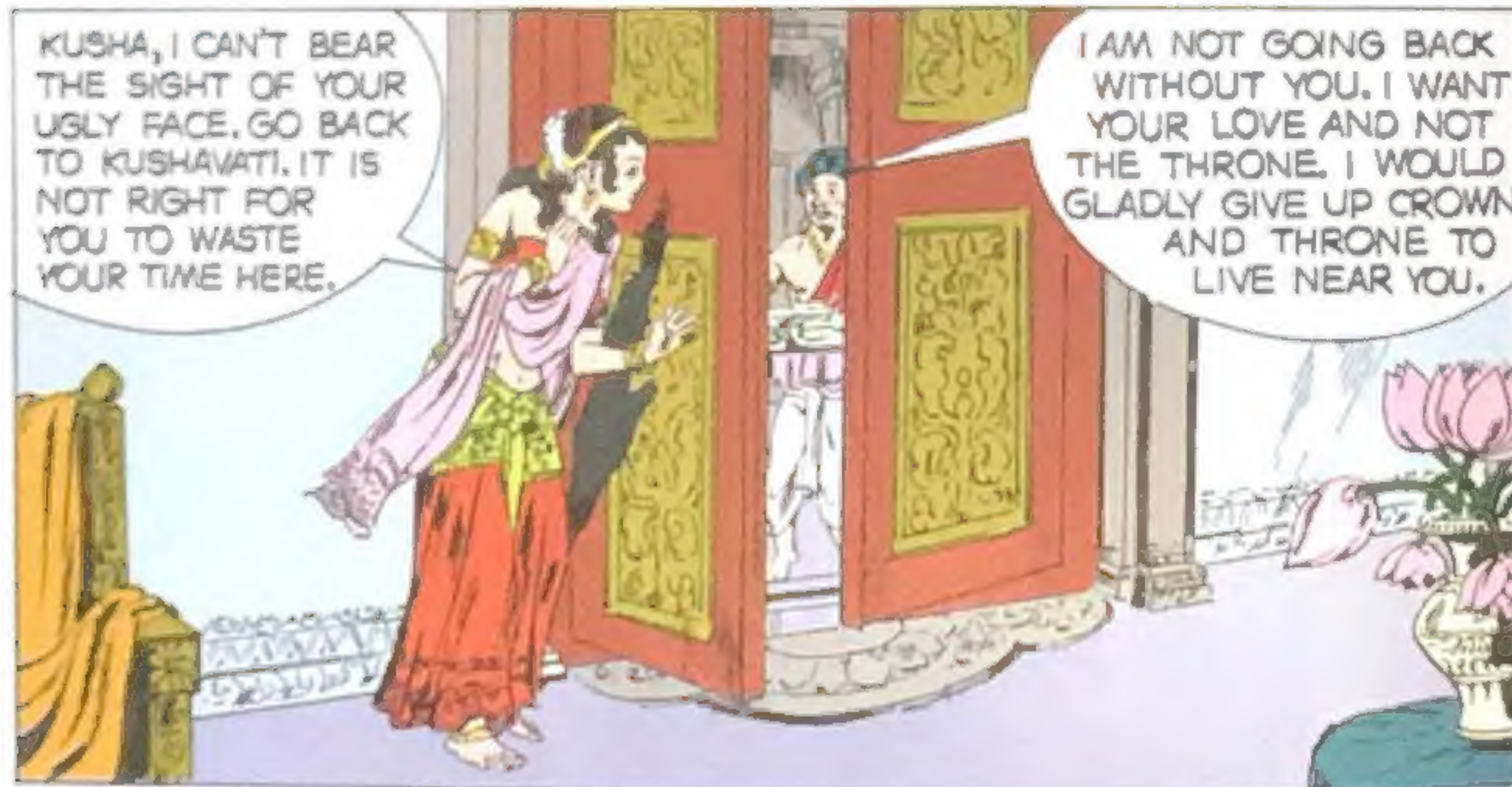
AT LAST I SHALL BE ABLE TO SEE MY WIFE.



THE NEXT DAY—



I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM, YET I MUST NOT LET HIM KNOW THAT I DO OR HE WILL STAY ON, THINKING I'VE YIELDED.



KUSHA, I CAN'T BEAR THE SIGHT OF YOUR UGLY FACE. GO BACK TO KUSHAVATI. IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR YOU TO WASTE YOUR TIME HERE.

I AM NOT GOING BACK WITHOUT YOU. I WANT YOUR LOVE AND NOT THE THRONE. I WOULD GLADLY GIVE UP CROWN AND THRONE TO LIVE NEAR YOU.



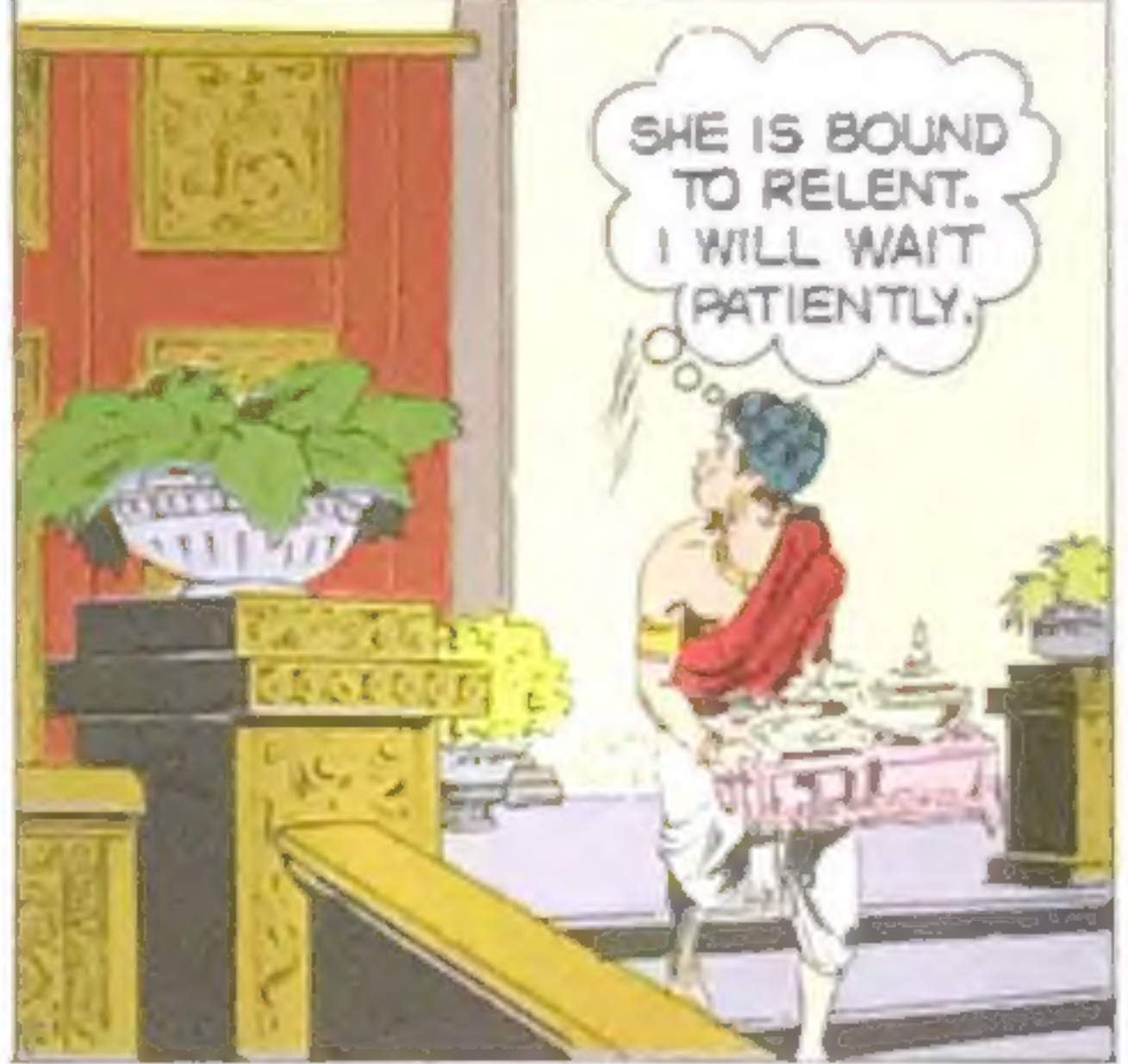
WHEN PRABHAVATI HEARD THIS SHE WAS ALARMED.

SUPPOSE HE DECLARES "I AM KING KUSHA" AND SEIZES MY HAND. NO ONE WILL STOP HIM. BESIDES, SOMEONE MIGHT OVERHEAR OUR TALK.

TO DISCOURAGE ANY FURTHER DIALOGUE, SHE CLOSED THE DOOR AND BOLTED IT.



KUSHA GAZED FOR A MOMENT AT THE CLOSED DOOR, AND THEN WENT DOWN.



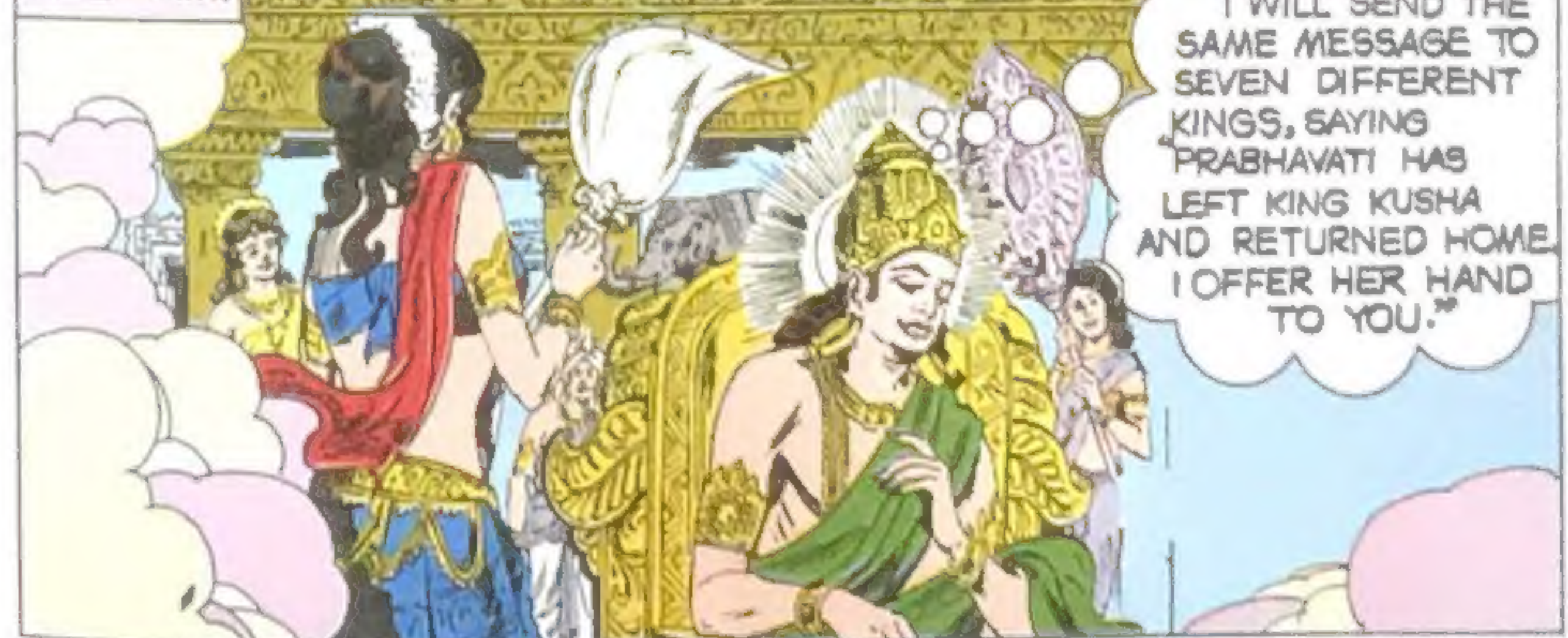
SHE IS BOUND TO RELENT. I WILL WAIT PATIENTLY.

BUT SEVEN LONG MONTHS PASSED AND KUSHA TOILED ON. AT LAST—

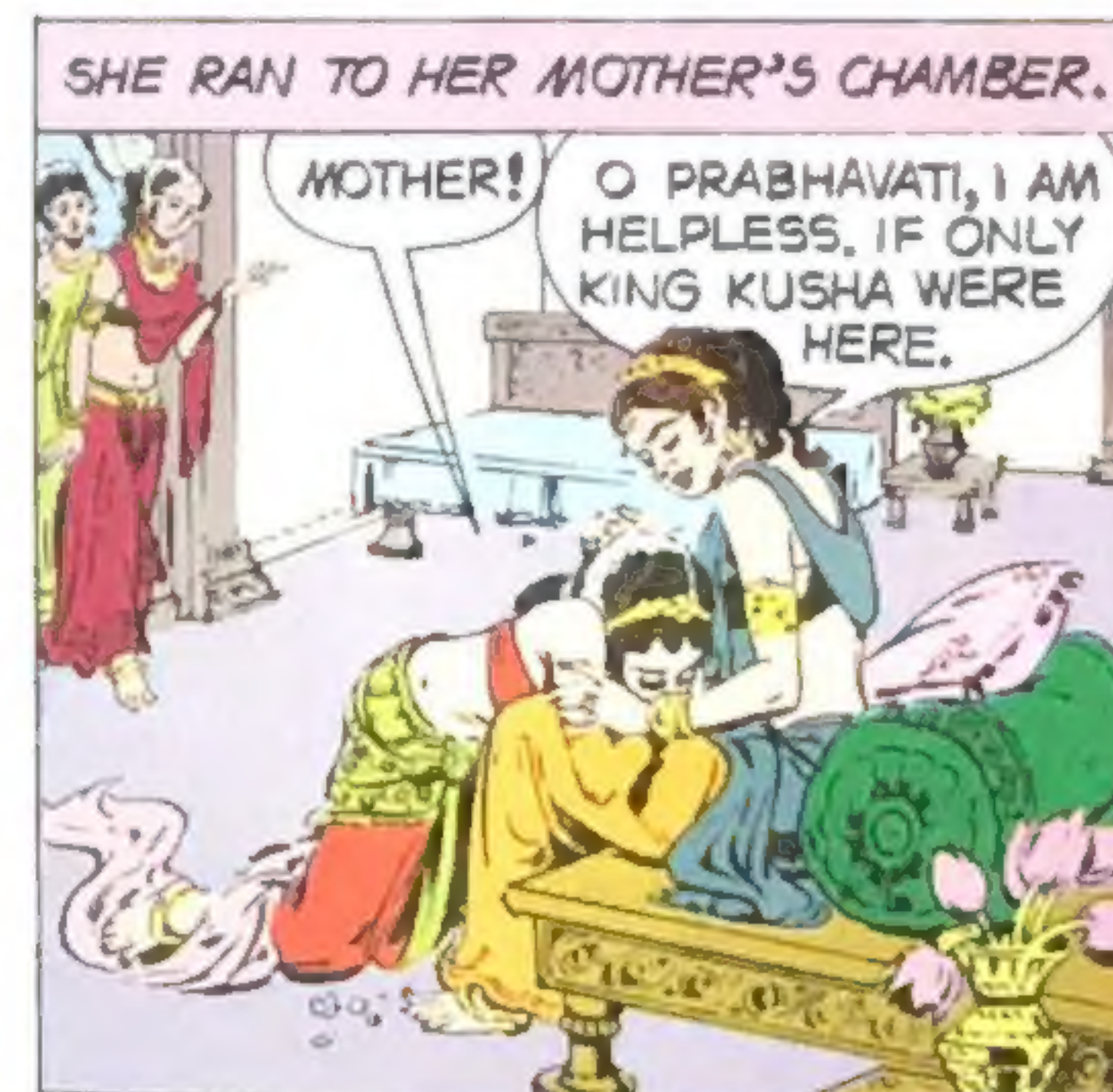
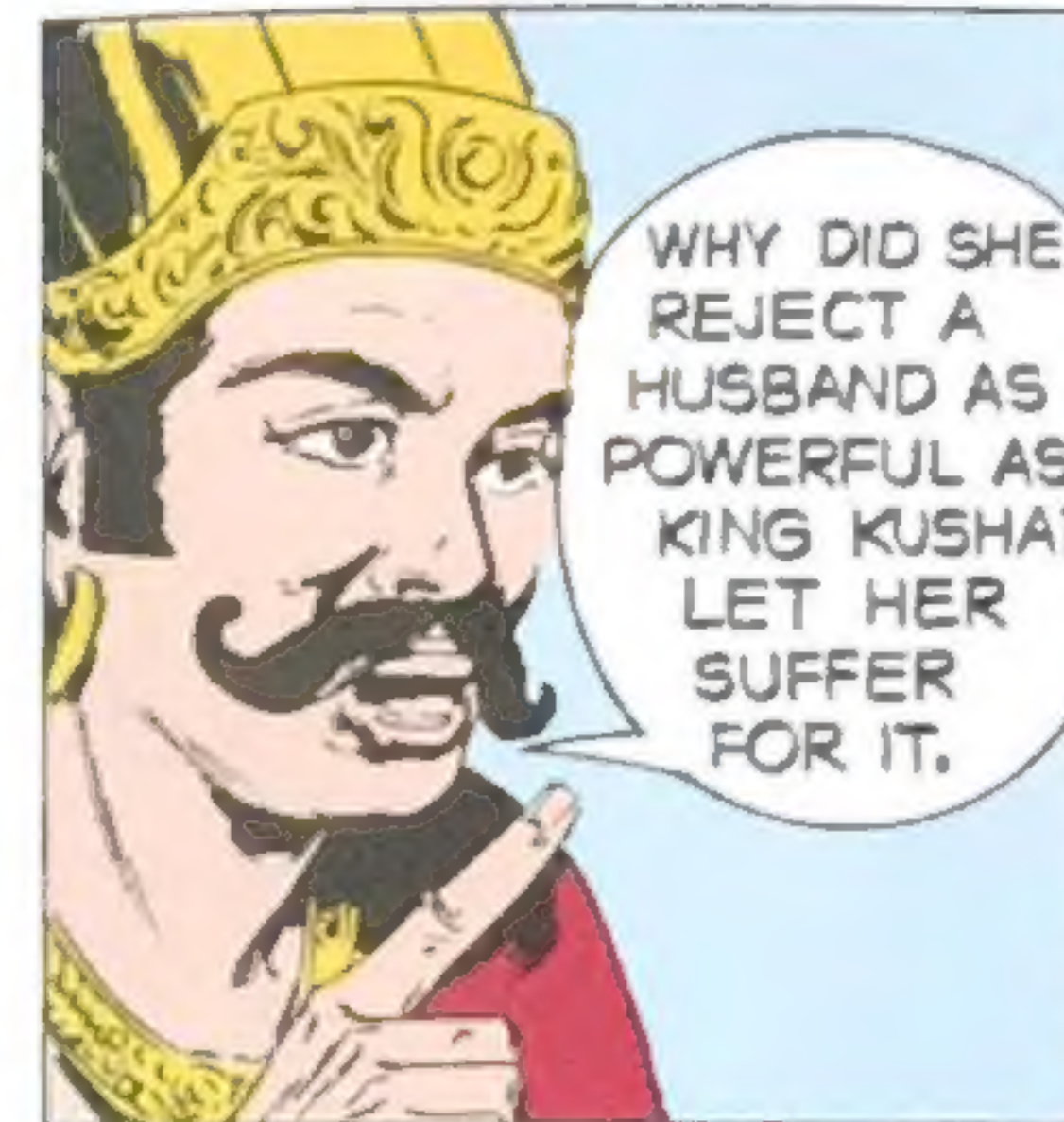


IN SEVEN MONTHS, SHE HAS NOT SO MUCH AS LET ME HAVE A GLIMPSE OF HER. WHY DO I PINE FOR HER? SHE IS HARSH AND CRUEL. I WILL RETURN TO MY KINGDOM AND MY PARENTS.

AT THAT MOMENT, REALISING HOW DISAPPOINTED KUSHA WAS, INDRA DECIDED TO HELP HIM.



I WILL SEND THE SAME MESSAGE TO SEVEN DIFFERENT KINGS, SAYING "PRABHAVATI HAS LEFT KING KUSHA AND RETURNED HOME. I OFFER HER HAND TO YOU."



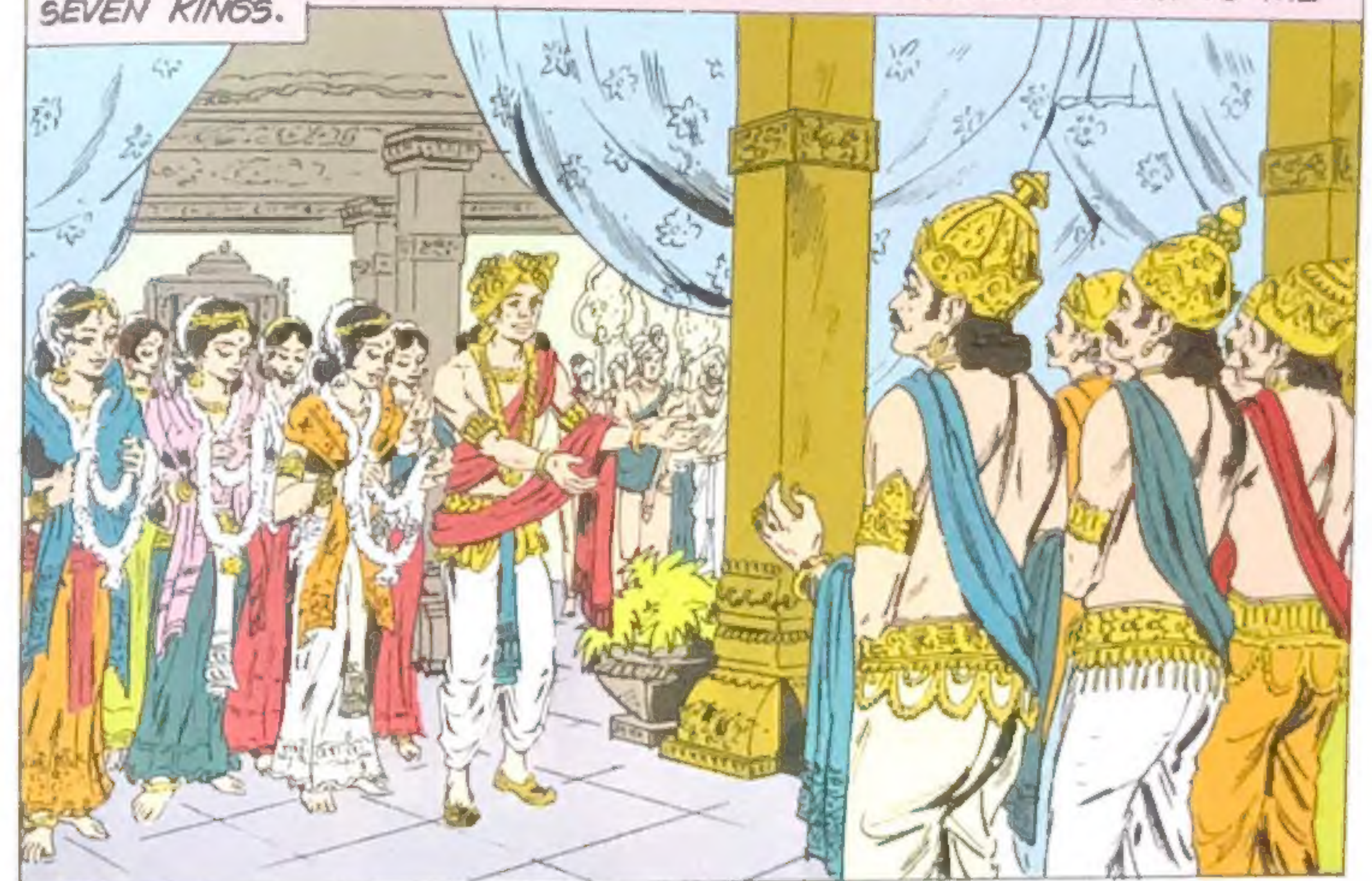
SHE RAN FORWARD AND FELL AT KUSHA'S FEET.



LEAVE THAT TO ME. GO. BATHE AND ADORN YOURSELF AND WAIT FOR ME IN YOUR PALACE.



KUSHA SETTLED MATTERS BY OFFERING HIS SEVEN SISTERS-IN-LAW TO THE SEVEN KINGS.



THEN HE AND PRABHAVATI WENT TO KUSHAVATI WHERE THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

